

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

February 2007

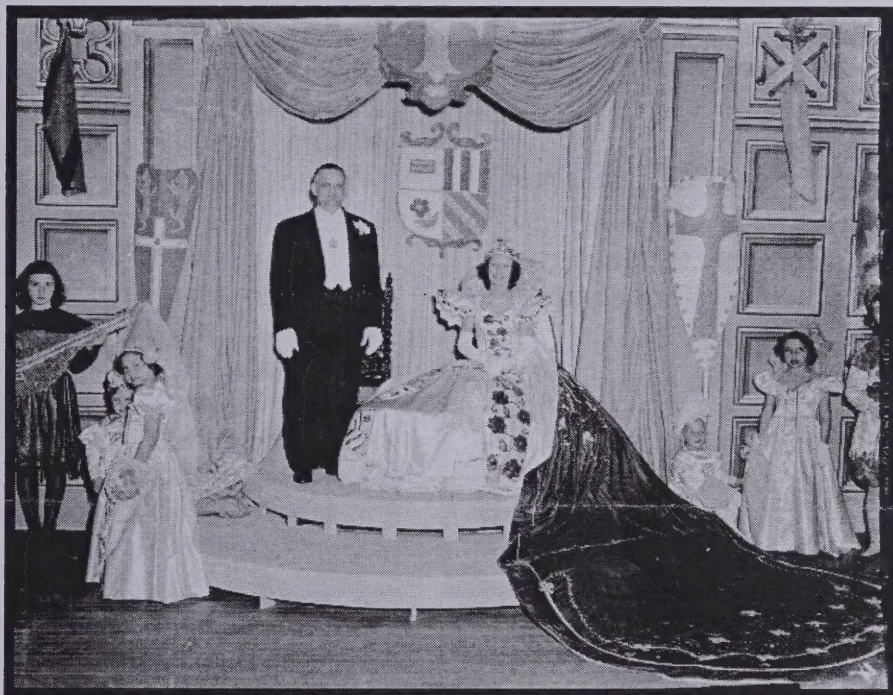
FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS

Our February luncheon will be held on Thursday, February 15, 2007, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street. The speaker will be local author Paul La Violette. Join us for a wonderful lunch and great company. Please call for reservations by noon on February 14, 2007, at 467-4090 because seating will be limited. The price of the lunch is \$7.00 payable at the door. A very special thank you goes to Prima Luke who is now our luncheon chef. Last month's shrimp etouffee was delicious!

MEMBERSHIP FEES

A big "THANK YOU" to all of you who have sent in your dues. If you haven't sent them in, please do so as soon as possible so our records can be kept up-to-date. Double check your address label for the expiration date.

THE HANCOCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 3356
BAY ST. LOUIS, MS. 39521



Past Mardi Gras Royalty
—from the Scafidi Collection

CARNIVAL AND MARDI GRAS

Edited by
Eddie Coleman
(from the files of the Hancock
County Historical Society)

On Fat Tuesday in 1699, d'Iberville and several companions, who had left Old Biloxi on an excursion to explore lands to the west, made camp sixty miles south of what later became New Orleans and named it *Point du Mardi Gras*. To commemorate the day, they had a drink of wine to bid farewell to the flesh. Thus, this simple ritual

began the celebration of Carnival, which we call Mardi Gras, in the United States.

Mardi Gras is a celebration older than Christianity itself with beginnings in prehistoric Greece. Among those pagan peoples, it was a spring sacrificial festival, in which the villagers thanked their gods for the fertility of their land, their animals, and their women. As this rustic custom was absorbed by the magnificent empires of Greece and Rome, it was expanded and corrupted into a day of licentiousness and lust until it was finally tempered, tamed, and timed by the early Christian Church as the last day of indulgence in wine, food, and revelry—

(continued on p. 3)

THE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

**PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE**

Each month when I write my message, I try to put a positive spin on our society's situation. The time has now come to inform you of our true state of affairs.

When the 2006 Board took office, we were faced with about \$40,000 worth of Katrina damages to the Lobrano House. We did not have one penny of windstorm, hail, or flood insurance. We now have some insurance, but because of prohibitive costs, we do not have nearly enough.

We have spent the largest part of our 2006 budget on roofing and electrical repairs. Apparently the flood water has compromised the soil under the building especially under the very heavy safe, so our biggest challenge is going to be shoring the addition at the rear of the building. This must be done before we can repair the sheetrock, paint inside and out, and replace the carpet. Along with these problems during the hurricane a side of the front museum section pulled away and is only temporarily repaired.

Our former treasurer, Ruth Thompson, has applied for many grants and FEMA monies. We have been promised assistance, but as of now only \$2,300 has come in for repairs. A \$15,000 grant from Bring Back the Coast has come our way, but it must be used for the purchase of much needed new equipment. As prudent

stewards we have cut as much "fat" from the budget as possible. We have even deleted the paid position on Monday and Tuesday, but have been lucky to find two competent volunteers.

The Board is grappling with ways to raise the money to do these extensive repairs, and we need help. **WE REALLY NEED YOUR HELP!** Many of you send us a contribution during the year to assist with expenses, and we are so thankful. If there is anyone who can contribute to the repairs fund, your contribution will be greatly appreciated. I don't believe that in our history we have had to ask for assistance.

Thank you so much for your continued support, and may God bless you and your families.

Melinda



6th EVE OF 1874

5th REPRESENTATION



(continued from p. 1)

the final farewell to flesh before the Lenten season. It followed the Church throughout Europe and became one of the most eagerly awaited annual celebrations of Italy, France, and even England.

There are really two celebrations of Mardi Gras in New Orleans. In one, the old and established social organizations and families follow traditional, well-preserved rituals. The other is a free-for-everyone free-for-all. Early celebrations had ladies throwing roses and bonbons from their balconies; however, this tradition soon degenerated to street "riff-raff" throwing sacks of flour and ultimately mud on revelers. By the time the Spanish controlled the Gulf Coast, these celebrations were so out of hand that the Spanish officials outlawed them for a while. After 1803, the Americans reinstated the traditions, but masking was outlawed when the mysterious Aaron Burr appeared in New Orleans one year during the celebration.

In 1820 Creole youths returning from Paris brought with them the idea of large groups banding together, and the first "official" parades began. Both Mobile and

New Orleans have major Mardi Gras celebrations with Mobile's celebration being the older of the two. Although a friendly "rivalry" exists nowadays, the New Orleans Mystic Krewe of Comus was organized in 1857 by the "Cowbellians," a Mobile group that paraded on New Year's Eve. The first Comus parade consisted of two floats, one for the king, and the second depicting Satan in the blazing fires of hell. **Carnival**, as we know it, **was born!**

In 1872 the Krewe of Rex was founded, and the tradition of Rex as "King of Carnival" began. Coincidental with the founding of Rex and the carnival season, the Grand Duke Alexandrovich Romanov of Russia was visiting in the United States and pursued a popular American actress, Miss Lydia Thompson, to New Orleans. He had become enamored of her after seeing her performance in the comedy *Bluebird* in which she sang "If Ever I Cease To Love," which immediately became the Duke's favorite song.

Upon learning of the Grand Duke's impending arrival, the people of New Orleans made what they considered appropriate preparations for his arrival, including a throne for him on the porch of the City Hall. However, the Grand Duke arrived not as a prince of Russia, but in the uniform of a Russian Naval Lieutenant and refused the throne prepared for him, preferring to stand throughout the ceremony. To justify his actions, he quoted from the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." Just as Rex rode up on his horse and bowed to the Grand Duke, someone in the band began singing "If Ever I Cease to Love." The Grand Duke was not amused, having preferred to keep his love affair with Miss Thompson a se-

cret.

The Grand Duke's appearance at the Comus Ball later that evening also reflected his displeasure with events earlier in the day. He refused to dance with any lady. He gave Miss Thompson a diamond necklace, but a few days later left town with another actress named Lotta Crabtree, who was playing in *The Little Detective* and to whom he gave an armband set in diamonds, pearls, and turquoise. Ah, so much for *noblesse oblige!*

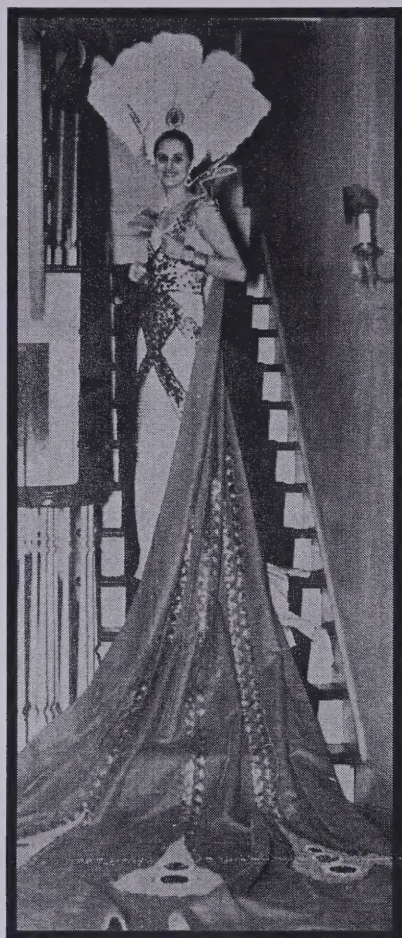
MARDI GRAS IN BAY SAINT LOUIS

(Edited from *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*)

The first Mardi Gras celebration in Bay Saint Louis occurred in 1896. Walter Gex reigned as the first king. At age sixteen Julia Olivari, who later became Mrs. Reginald Blaize, reigned as the first queen. The next year Robert Perre was king.

"Bay Saint Louis had its own distinctive form of observing the Mardi Gras in 1904. The morning of Tuesday, February 17, was spent in individual masking. At





2:30 P. M., the royal yacht, *Mizpah*, was sighted near Pass Marianne, and shortly afterward, 'amid the booming of cannon and the strains of martial music, their gracious majesties landed at pier 990' (*Echo*, 2/20/1904).

"The keys to the city were presented to Rex by Charles A. Butler, Duke of Photography, who complimented his highness in choosing Bay Saint Louis as the capital of his kingdom, favoring it over the other towns along the coast. St. Stanislaus students sat down to their annual Mardi Gras spread at six o'clock and did annual justice to it.

"At 7:30 [P. M.], the parade formed. It soon began its march along Front Street [Beach Boulevard] to Main, up Main to Second, from Second to Bookter, along Bookter to Front, southward on Front to Citizen, up Citizen to Second, and back along

Second to Union. While the floats were being returned to the den, the maskers and merrymakers continued to the ballroom where 'they danced and enjoyed themselves until they were quite exhausted, and were only too glad to retire and rest their weary limbs.' Henry L. Allen, Duke of Music, was highly praised for the manner in which he handled the royal band."

POST-WORLD WAR II CELEBRATION

(Edited from *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*)

After World War II the Parent-Teacher Association of Bay High School decided to celebrate Mardi Gras with a parade and a carnival ball. Thus began an annual tradition of the school.

Local shopkeepers, students, and civic and school organizations and clubs decorated floats to enter in the parade and delighted townspeople with "an elaborate parade and a day-long celebration of fun and entertainment." Masked and costumed spectators enjoyed

viewing this parade of the "Krewe of Chicapoula."

That night a carnival ball was held in the school's auditorium during which a king, queen, and court were chosen from the eighth grade class.

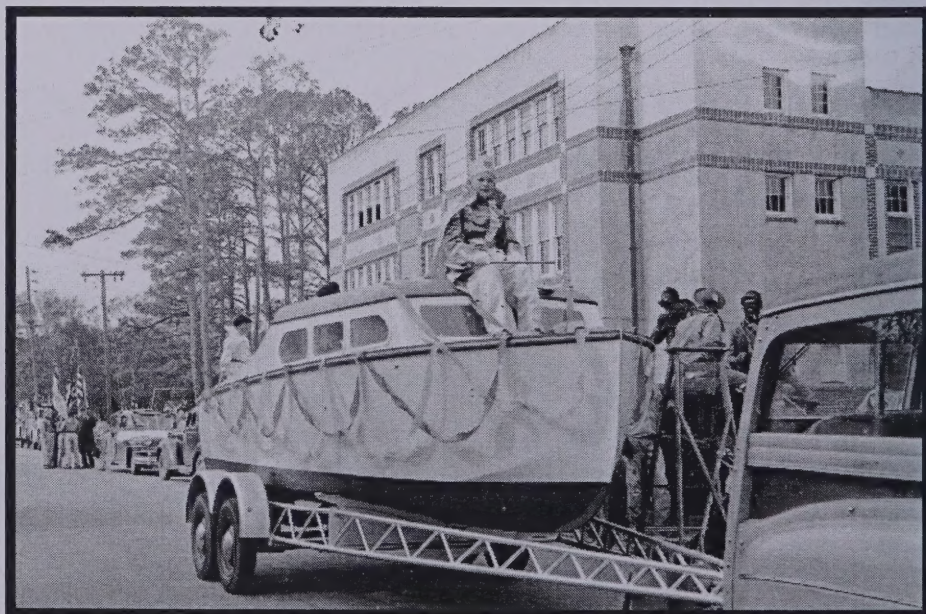
MARDI GRAS IN HANCOCK COUNTY

(Edited from *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*)

In 1966 the Krewe of Nereids was organized in Waveland. Its parade is one of the most eagerly anticipated of the Carnival season. Family-friendly, the Nereids parade is always well attended by locals and visitors alike. Spectators arrive early to claim their viewing spots. Many of them make a day of it with picnic baskets piled high with goodies, coolers filled with "refreshments," and lawn chairs.

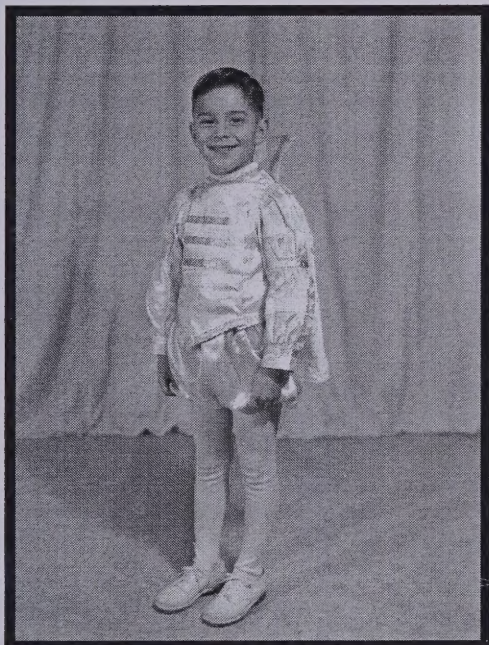
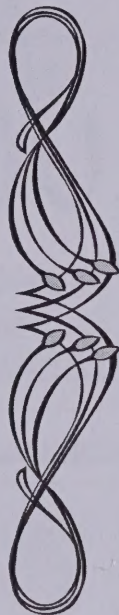
Organized in the 1970's, the Krewe of Diamondhead held its first Mardi Gras Ball in 1975 with Joe Salvatore reigning as King Ali'i Honua.

Other krewes which parade



A late 1940's early 1950's Mardi Gras parade

in Diamondhead are the Krewe of Selene, the Krewe of Royal-T's, and the Krewe of Moonbeams. Other parading Bay Saint Louis krewes are the Krewe of Kids and the Krewe of Real People.



If any of our readers recognize the revelers pictured in this issue of *The Historian*, please call us at 467-4090 so we can update our records.

All photographs used in this issue of *The Historian* come from the Scafidi Collection donated by the family of Anthony J. Scafidi, local photographer in the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's.

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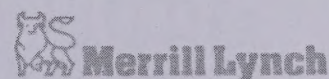
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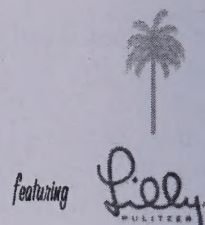
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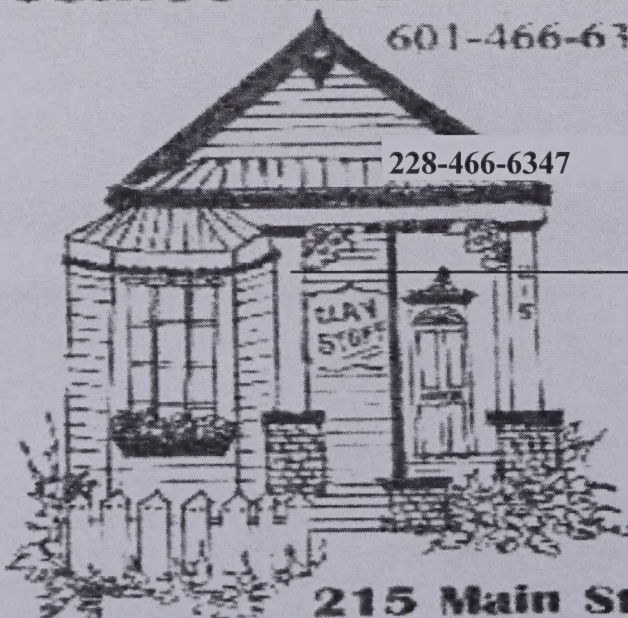
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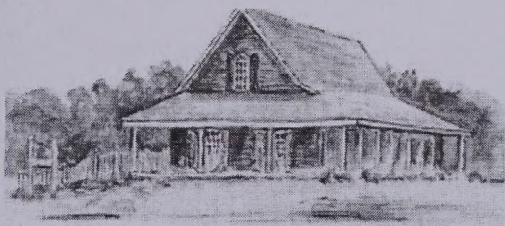
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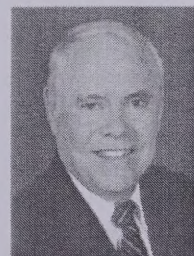
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